Synopsis of preceding chapters at end of this installment.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VII.

If he might not return to Beaulieu within the year, and if his brother's dogs were to be set upon him if he showed face upon Minstead land, then indeed was Alleyne adrift upon earth. North, south, east and west—he might turn where he would, but all was equally chill and cheerless. The Abbot had rolled ten silver crowns in a lettuce-leaf and hid them away in the bottom of his scrip, but that would be a sorry support for twelve long months. In all the darkness there was but the one bright spot of the sturdy comrades whom he had left that evening; if ne could find them again all would be well. He pushed on, therefore, now walking and now running.

The forest began to shred out into scattered belts of trees, with gleam of earth and stretch of pasture-land between. Here and there by the way-side stood little knots of wattle-and-daub huts, with shock-haired laborers lounging by the doors and red-cheeked children sprawling in the roadway.

By these Alleyne knew that he was on the very fringe of the forest, and therefore no great way from Christchurch. Right glad later, was the traveller to see the high tower of Christchurch Priory gleaming in the mellow evening light, and gladder still when, rounding a corner, he came upon his comrades of the morning scated astraddle upon a fallen tree. They had a flat space before them, on which they alternately threw little square pieces of bone, and were so intent upon their occupation that they never raised eye as he approached them. He observed with astonishment, as he drew near, that the archer's sow was on John's side, and the steel cap laid upon the tree-trunk between them.

"Mort de ma vie!" Aylward shouted, looking down at the dice. "Never had I such cursed luck. A murrain on the bones! I have not thrown a good main since I left Navarre. I am like to reach Christchurch in my shirt." Then suddenly glancing up, "Hola, by the splendor of heaven, here is our cher petit! Now, by my ten finger-bones! this is a rare sight to mine eyes" He sprang up and threw his arms

light. "Shall not get away from us again."
"I wish no better," said he, with a pringling in the eyes at this hearty greeting.
"Well said, lad!" cried big John. "We three shall to the wars together, and the devil may fin away with the Abbot of Beaulieu! But your feet and hosen are all besmudged. Hast been in the water?"

are all besmudged. Hast been in the water?"

"I have in good sooth," Alleyne answered, and then, as they journeyed on their way, he told them the many things that had befallen him

"But you," said Alleyne, "there have been changes with you also. Where are bow and sword and cap—and why so warlike, John?"

"It is a game which friend Aylward hath been a-teaching of me."

"And I found him an overapt pupil." grumbled the bowman. "He hath stripped me. But, by my hilt! you must render them back to me. camarade, lest you bring discredit upon my mission, and I will pay you for them at armorer's prices."

"Take them back, man, and never heed the pay," said John. "I did but wish to learn the feel of them, since I am like to have such trinkets hung to my own girdle for some years to come."

"Ma foi, he was born a free com-

to my own girdle for some years to come."

"Ma foi, he was born a free companion!" cried Aylward. "He hath the very trick of speech and turn of thought. I take them back then, and indeed it gives me unease not to feel my yew-stave tapping against my leg. It chanced on that very evening that Sir Nigel Loring, having supped before sunset, as was his custom, had taken his dogs for an evening breather. Two russet-clad varlets, with loud halloo and cracking whips, walked thigh-deep amid the swarm, guiding, controlling, and urging. Behind came Sir Nigel himself, with Lady Loring upon his arm, the pair walking slowly and sedately, as befitted both their age and their condition. They paused at the bridge.

Synopsis of preceding chapters at end of this installment.

doubt not that you are right, and that Maude's wings need elipping, which I is may leave in your hands when I am gone, for, in sooth, this peaceful fire gone, for, in sooth, this peaceful fire gone, for, in sooth, this peaceful fire gone, for in sooth, the peaceful fire gone, for in sooth this peaceful fire gone, for in the sooth of bilthe and ready to lay lance in rest bilthe and ready to lay lance in rest for England's cause, it would ill between me to prate of service done. It would be bitter shame to me, and also to you, since my fame is yours, that I should now hold back if a man's work list to be done. Besides, bethink you how low is constableship which the Earl of Salisbury hath bestowed upon us we could scarce uphold the state which is fitting to our degree. Therefore, my sweeting, there is the more need that I should turn to where there is good pay to be earned and brave ransoms to be word. My dear lord, under the south well, should speed you on to giory and renown, not hold you back when fame is to be won. Yet what can I say? for all men know that you valor needs the curb and not the spirm, heart's dove, for it is like that there may be no war warged, and we must await the news. But here are three strangers, and one, as I take it, a soldier fresh from service. It is likely that he may live and the fall in the lady is many and of what is stirring over the dading light the three companions.

reared up, with eyes ablaze with fear and hate, and whirled its great paws above the knight to smite him to the earth. He, however, blinking with puckered eyes, reached up his kerchiet, and flicked the beast twice across the snout with it. "Ah, saucy! saucy!" quoth he, with gentie chiding; on which the bear, uncertain and puzzled, dropped its fore legs to earth again, and waddling back, was soon swathed in ropes by the bearward and a crowd of peasants who had been in close pursuit. As they passed through the castle gate, John blucked at Aylward's sleeve, and the two fell behind.
"I must crave your pardon, comrade."

behind.
"I must crave your pardon, comrade," said he bluntly. "I was a fool not to know that a little rooster may be the gamest. I believe that this man is indeed a leader whom we may follow." CHAPTER VIII.

Brothers.

Shoulders drew into tense bunches with the strain of the tug, the stone gave way from its bed with a gurgling suck and came free in his hands. With a deep chested chuckle, as the archeristepped forward to help in the throwing. Hordle John straightened himself and hurled the rock well out into the stream.

"Good lack!" cried Sir Nigel, and "Good laughing and wiping the caked dirt from his fingers.

"I have felt his arms round my ribs, said the bowman, "and they crackle yet at the thought of it. This other comrade, fair Sir, is a right learned clerk, for all that he is so young, hight Alleyne, the son of Edric, brother to the Socman of Minstead."

"Young man," quoth Sir Nigel sternity, "If you are of the same way of thought as your brother, you may not pass portcullis of mine."

"Nay, fair Sir," cried A "vard hastly," "I will be pledge for R that they have no thought in common; for this very day his brother hath set his dogs upon him, and driven him from his lands."

"And are you, too, of the White Company?" asked Sir Nigel. "Hast had small experience of war, if I may judge wan."

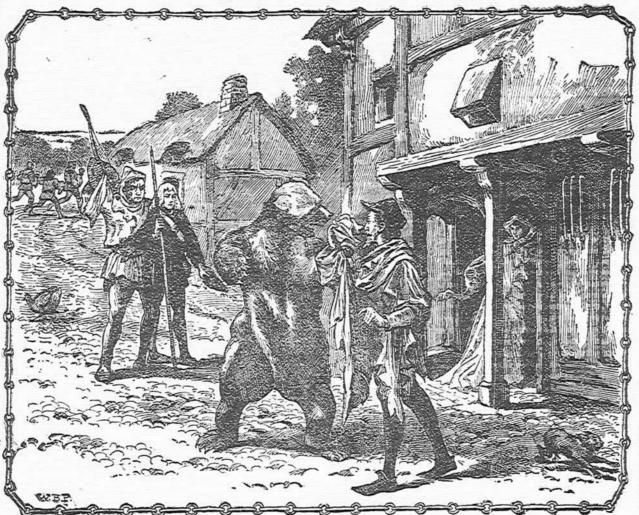
"My name, friend!" quoth the bowman, "My name, friend!" quoth the bowman."

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"Say, fair Sir," cried A " vard hastly," "I will be pledge for R that they have no thought in common; for this very day his brother hath set his dogs upon him, and driven him from his lands."

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"You may find the scath yourself, my lusty friend, if you raise your great cudgel to me. I had as lief have the tastle drawbridge drop upon my pate."
"Tell me, Aylward." said Alleyne earnestly, with hands outstretched to keep the pair asunder, "what is the cause of quarrel, that we may see whether honorable settlement may not be arrived at?" be arrived at?"

The bowman looked down at his feet and then up at the moon. "Parbleau!" he cried, "the cause of quarrel? Why, mon pett, it was years ago in Limousin, and how can I bear in mind what was the cause of it? Simon there hath it at the end of his tongue."
"Not I, in troth," replied the other. "I have had other things to think of. There was some sort of bickering over dice, or wine, or was it a woman, coz?"
"Pasques Dieu! but you have nicked it." cried Aylward. "It was indeed about a woman; and the quarrel must go forward, for I am still of the same mind as before."
"What of the woman, then?" asked The bowman looked down at his

mind as before."

"What of the woman, then?" asked Simon. "May the murrain strike mil I can call to mind aught about her." It was La Blanche Rose, maid at the sign of the Trois Corbeaux at Limoges. Bless her pretty heart! Why, mon gar, I loved her."

"So did a many," quoth Simon. "I call her to mind now. On the very day that we fought over the little hussy, she went off with Evan ap Rice, a long-legged Welsh dagsman. They have a hostel of their own now, somewhere on the banks of Garonne, where the landlord drinks so much of the liquor that there is little left for the liquor that there is little left for the customers."

customers."

"So ends our quarrel, then," said Aylward, sheathing his sword. "A Welsh dagsman, i' faith! C' etait mauvais gout, camarade, and the more so when she had a jolly archer and a lusty man-at-arms to choose from."

The old soldiers and Hordle John strode off together in all good-fellowship. Alleyne had turned to follow them, when he felt a touch upon his shoulder, and found a young page by his side.

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"The Lord Loring commands," said the boy, "that you will follow me to the great chamber, and await him there."

Up the broad steps Alleyne went, following his boyish guide, until at the folding oak doors the latter paused, and ushered him into the main hall of the castle.

On entering the room the clerk looked round; but, seeing no one, he continued to stand, his cap in his hand. examining with the greatest interest a chamber which was so different to any to which he was accustomed. Most interesting of all to Alleyne was a small ebony table at his very side on which, by the side of a chess-board and the scattered chessmen, there lay an open manuscript written in a right clerkly hand, and set forth with brave flourishes and devices along the margins. In vain Alleyne bethough thim of where he was and of those laws of good breeding and decorum which should restrain him; those colored capitals and black even lines drew his hand down to them, as the loadstone when it had down to them, as the loadstone when he had himself proposed some infamous thing. She was back again in an instant, however, in another of her varying moods.

an open manuscript written in a right clerkly hand, and set forth with brave flourishes and devices along the margins. In vain Alleyne bethought him of where he was and of those laws of good breeding and decorum which should restrain him; those colored canitals and black even lines drew his hand down to them, as the loadstone draws the needle, until, almost before he knew it, he was standing with the romance of Garin de Montglane before his eyes, so absorbed in its contents as to be completely oblivious of where he was and why he had come there.

He was brought back to himself, however, by a sudden little ripple of quick feminine laughter. Aghast, he dropped the manuscript among the chessmen and stared in bewilderment round the room. It was as empty and as still as ever. Again he stretched his hand out to the romance, and again came that roguish burst of merriment. He looked up at the ceiling, back at the closed door, and round at the stiff folds of motionless tapestry. Of a sudden, however, he caught a quick shimmer from the corner of a high-backed bancal in front of him, and, shifting a pace of two to the side, saw a white, slender hand, which held a mirror of polished silver in such a way that the concealed observer could see without being seen. He stood irresolute, uncertain whether to advance or to take no notice; but, even as he hesitated the mirror was whipped in, and a tall and stately young lady swept out from behind the oaken screen, with a dancing light of mischief in her eyes Alleyne started with astonishment as he recognized the very maiden who had suffered from his brother's violence in the forest. She no longer wore her gay riding-dress, however, but was attired in a long sweping robe of black velvet of Bruges, with delicate tracery of white lace at neck and at wrist, scarce to be seen against the ivory skin. Beautiful as she had seemed to him before, the lithe charm of her figure and the proud, free grace

rood! I shall drive him into the earth like a nail into a door, rather than see you do scath to each other."

"Fore God, this is a strange way of preaching peace," cried Black Simon "You may find the scath yourself, my lusty friend, if you raise your great cudgel to me. I had as lief have the castle drawbridge drop upon my pate."

"Tell me, Aylward," said Alleyne earnestly, with hands outstretched to be a strange way of the rich simplicity of her attire.

"Ah, you start," said she, with the same sidelong look of mischief, "and I cannot marvel at it. Didst not look to see the distressed damozel again. Ah, that I were a minstrel, that I might put it into rhyme, with the whole romance—the luckless maid, the wicked socman, and the virtuous clerk! So might our fame have gone down together for all time, and you be num-

whole romance—the luckless maid, the wicked socman, and the virtuous clerk! So might our fame have gone down together for all time, and you be numbered with Sir Percival or Sir Galahad, or all the other rescuers of oppressed ladies."

"What I did," said Alleyne, "was too small a thing for thanks; and yet, if I may say it without offence, it was too grave and near a matter for mirth and railiery. I had counted on my brother's love, but God has willed that it should be otherwise. It is a joy to me to see you again, lady, and to know that you have reached home in safety, if this be indeed your home."

"Yes, in sooth, Castle Twynham is my home, and Sir Nigel Loring my father. I should have told you so this morning, but you said that you were coming hither, so I bethought me that I might hold it back as a surprise to you. Oh, dear, but it was brave to see you." she cried, bursting out a-laughing once more, standing with her hand pressed to her side, and her half-closed eyes twinkling with amusement. "You drew back and came forward with your eyes upon my book there, like the mouse who sniffs the cheese and yet dreads the trap."

"I take shame." said Alleyne, "that I should have touched it."

"Nay, it warmed my very heart to see it. So glad was I that I laughed for very pleasure. My fine preacher can himself be tempted then, thought I; he is not made of another clay to the rest of us."

"God help me! I am the weakest of the weak," groaned Alleyne. "I pray that I may have more strength!"

"And to what end?" she asked sharply that I may have more strength!"

"And to what end?" she asked sharply to be answered? Wilt do what I ask?" said she.

"What is it, lady."

"It's but to bear me out in what I

ous thing. She was back again in an instant, however, in another of her varying moods.

"Look at that, my friend!" said she.

"If you had been shut up in abbey or in cell this day you could not have taught a wayward maiden to abide by the truth. Is it not so? What avail is the shepherd if he leaves his sheep?"

"A sorry shepherd!" said Allyene humbly. "But here is your noble father."

"And you shall see how worthy a pupil I am. Father, I am much beholden to this young clerk, who was to fervice to me and helped me this very morning in Minstead Woods, four miles to the north of the Christchurch road, where I had no call to be, you having ordered it otherwise." All this she reeled off in a loud voice, and then glanced with sideling questioning eyes at Alleyne for his approval.

(To be Continued Next Week.)

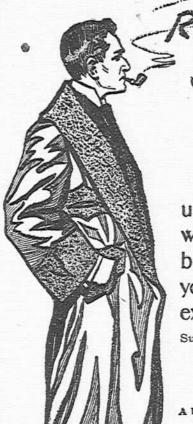
(To be Continued Next Week.)

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters,

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

The scenes of the story are laid in the 14th century. Hordle John. a lay-brother of the Cistercian Monastery. Abbey of Beaulieu. flees from the monastery after being found guilty of certain Serious charges brought agrainst him by a number of the monastery after being found guilty of certain Serious charges brought agrainst him by a number of the monastery. The same day, another of the lay-brethren of the monastery, alleyne Edric on, takes his departure in accordance with a provision of his father's will, designating that he should, when he became twenty years old, go forth for one year to choose for himself his future calling. In sadness he wanders from the monastery to visit his brother, the Secman of Minstead, whose reputation is a moet unsavory one. At nightfall Alleyne seeks shelter in a road-side inn where he meets hordle John, and Samkin Aylward, an English archer just back from the French wars. Hordle John, getting into a controversy with Aylward, engages in a wrestling bout with the bowman, and is defeated. He decides to join the White Company. Alleyne finds I is brother in Minstead woods, quarreling with a beautiful damsel, whom he rescues. He cells her of his intention to joi his comparious of the lim who are to fisht under SIr Nigel in the White Company. On hearing this she laughingly leaves him without telling her name.

What Does This Mean?



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Fresh Blood

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